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## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Austin-American Statesman has asked letters on the issue of redistricting from all sources to appear below. Letters about the issue or other news stories may be accepted. Letters should focus on the issue and not be too general. Letters must carry a name, complete mailing address and daytime telephone number. Letter writers may address their use of "I" to the editor. Address letters to Letters to the Editor, Austin-American Statesman, P.O. Box 570, Austin, Texas 78767.

## LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Public Forum contributions should be from persons with an expertise or involvement in a field of current public interest. These writers in response to a Public Forum Contribution should be limited to the writer. A submission should carry a name, complete mailing address, daytime telephone number and a statement of the writer's involvement or expertise in the subject being discussed. We reserve the right to edit submissions. Address contributions to Public Forum, P.O. Box 570, Austin, Texas 78767.

## LETTERS WITH THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The Austin-American Statesman's editorial board will be best informed with members of the press, business organizations, social organizations, public interest groups, etc., or individuals for publication on the issue matter of public interest. Because of the press of business, the paper is unable to do so in every day but reserves a space for such meetings, though there may be exceptions to regular meetings. To submit a meeting, call the office at 446-3888.

## OPINION

## Parenthood looks askance at current gubernatorial campaigns


 Dave  
McNeely

**QUESTION:** A recent newspaper article referred to Ann Richards as the first woman to run a serious campaign for governor since Miriam "Ma" Ferguson in 1932. Is this true? If so, why?

**ANSWER:** "Yes, it is," Parenthood was a state representative from Corpus Christi in 1978 and another unsuccessful runner before the Texas House of Representatives before running as a progressive Democratic candidate for governor in the 1978 election.

She is still not well in Houston, where she practices law. She declined the interview in a well-appointed, high-class apartment in downtown Houston, professional but without drama.

Her hair, once long and black, is now short and white but she looks a decade younger than her 33 years. And she still looks more comme il faut, and obviously thinks of her political resume in recent years has given her some control and trying to end military domination in Texas under supporters by dollars from the U.S. government.

Parenthood is disappointed by this

governmental agents.

"See, I just can't buy this thing — and I'm not speaking of her specifically. I'm speaking in a much more general way — and I know it's unconstitutional action, which is like sleeping dogs lie, and then get in there, and then I'll get to the issue. I don't believe that."

"I think women's issues are better; they're more difficult when you're in office. I know I'm isolated in thinking that, and maybe it's true you don't see situations that way. But, when I saw the level of debate, I'm really distressed by it."

She is particularly turned off by the Conservative wing away from environmentalism, and by the way Jim Justice and Mark White "rush over each other on the death penalty." This applies especially to White, she said, who is a TV commentator with past photos of men put to death while he was governor.

"I wonder what the families of these executed people must feel," she said. She observed that the United States and South Africa are the only Western nations that have the death penalty.

As you can see, Parenthood is not shy about expressing her opinions and never has been. She was a member of the so-called "Thirty Thirty" club majority in the 180-member Texas House.

She and 29 other brave souls were the die-hards in 1971 who voted for a House investigation of charges by the Securities and Exchange Commission that then-House Speaker Jim Justice and others got quick-pride stock deals to help push legislation. Justice was later convicted for his role in what came to be called the Sharpersteen stock fraud scandal.

That scandal became the driving force to the 1972 elections. When it came time for a progressive candidate to protest the business-as-usual approach to government, Parenthood stepped forward. She did not win, but soon ended up with a strong law-oriented campaign that called a large number of progressive voters.

In the first primary, she got 27.9 percent of the vote, running second to Ralph Branca, who had 41.9 percent. But Parenthood and Branca together

ended the political careers of then-Lt. Gov. Lee Barnes, who ran third with 17.8 percent, and then-Lt. Gov. Bruce Smith, who had 10.9 percent.

Branca was the result, with 50.3 percent, and the general election.

At the Democratic National Convention last summer, Parenthood got national attention as the first woman put forth as a candidate for vice president. She didn't win.

Two years later, Parenthood ran for governor again. This time, she did not pack with many of her supporters from the 1972 election, though she beat Lt. Gov. Bruce, stamping on it. Parenthood got just 25.1 percent of the vote, as Branca emerged to victory in both the primary and general election.

And that was it for Parenthood in statewide politics. In 1978 she was named president of their College in Albany, N.Y. She stayed in that post until 1981, and then returned to Texas, where she has quietly practiced law since then.

Memory, an Austin-Dinnerwoman attorney, covers political issues affecting the state.

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